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ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

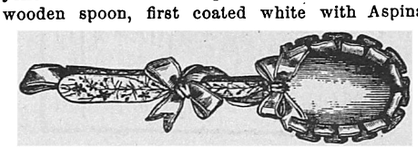
LILLIAN S. WOODFORD. Questions of a general character in regard to house-decoration or ornamentation, are generally difficult to answer; because, mainly, the range for reply covers so vast a number of articles. But to specialize in an objective direction, that is more frequently than wisely overlooked, we would call attention to the possibilities which exist in pressed flowers for ornamental purposes. There could be nothing more pleasing than the window transparencies of which pressed flowers are the objective feature; beautiful screens are made with pressed flowers as the objective decoration, and pictures of pressed flowers, when successfully made, are quite as beautiful as those in painting of water-colors. The flowers best adapted to pressing, and which may be used most effectively, are those of single petals of delicate, silky texture, and high color—field poppies, anemones, the eglantine, violets and pansies for example—although with care and patience, poly-petalous flowers, and those of fleshy texture may be thoroughly flattened by pressure, and are thus effective for use. Moreover, the use of flowers of single petals alone would sadly limit the number and the variety in the generous abundance of nature. The ferns, and all leaves of frond-like structure, fennel, and other of the delicate feathery greens, lend themselves delightfully to arrangements of pressed flowers; the leaves of the geranium and others of like character are charming in bouquets; and brilliant and imperishable effects of color are secured in the use of the leaves of the geraniums, the coleases and other plants of party-colored foliage in studies of pressed flowers; while mosses and lichens may be pleasingly introduced as a groundwork or foundation in an elaborate design. Cases, with paper expressly prepared for botanical specimens, are among the conveniences to be found for travelers; but, the prepared paper not at hand, old newspapers may be used successfully, care being had that several sheets of paper are laid between the specimens to be pressed, a board with heavy weights being laid on the top. For the first several days the paper should be changed every day, if newspapers are employed in the process of pressing flowers, to avoid their moulding from natural dampness, and they should be very gently lifted at each removal to prevent tearing and mutilation. It is almost needless to remind one that, in the first instance, every petal and every leaf should be carefully straightened out, and that every fibre, tendril, prickle, bract, and other appendage of nature should be considered to render the attempt satisfactory. In the beginning no more can be done than simply to lay the flowers between the sheets of paper as well as possible with the fingers; but after the softening of twenty-four hours' pressure, they may be perfectly smoothed with the assistance of a fine bristle brush or a camel's hair brush. With the precautions advised, not only the form of the flowers is preserved by pressure, but the colors will be but slightly faded or changed.

After pressing the flowers, the composition into studies is entered upon. For the window transparencies referred to, a beautiful study may be effected by a mat of moss for a ground work, out of which may spring a cluster of maiden's hair fern leaves, in the midst of which are set a few ox-eye daisies, a few blue-bells, several scarlet poppies and a few corn flowers and primroses, with as many of the green leaves of the respective plants as may be needed to make a pleasing picture. Or, if the study be intended to be merely a bouquet, there may be a composition of single wild roses, with wild violets, anemones and primroses nestled in the midst of a few fern leaves, and tied up with a knot of ribbon grass. And one study suggesting another, endless variety is possible in pictures formed of pressed flowers. Attached to a panel of glass with gum tragacanth, this panel is covered with another panel of equal size, the edges bound together with beading, and unframed, or framed in very narrow moulding, the transparency is suspended from the lower sash of the window. Ground glass, because of its dewy effect, is preferable to clear glass for window pictures of pressed flowers; and very delightful effects are produced in elaborate designs of studies in pressed flowers, done on large sheets of ground glass mounted in gilded frame-work for single fold screens. Pressed flower pictures are among the specialties of art-effort in the Holy Land, and no visitor returns from Palestine without a collection of cards showing the flora of the country. All of these studies are necessarily interesting as showing the abundant floral wealth with which beneficent nature has enriched a country so much and so frequently desolated, and some of them are exceedingly beautiful as compositions, while they furnish the most valuable hints as to the permanent preservation of flowers in form and color, and their use in household decoration. In Australia, also, a specialty is made of pressed flowers. Albums of the pressed leaves of the different ferns of the country, bound in the fern wood of Australia, are scarcely less highly prized than the albums of pressed flowers bound in the olive-wood of Palestine; and latterly there have appeared fine pressed flower pictures of the flora of the Rocky Mountains. The subject is full of suggestiveness. Our country, in all parts, teems with delightful and interesting flora. Why may not the pressing of flowers become an industry with us, as it is with the Syrians and the Australians? And why can we not substitute studies of pressed flowers for the chromos which flood our market at Christmas and Eastertide and other gift seasons? In Palestine and in other countries of the East and in Australia, the pressing of flowers has become a national occupation and a source of revenue. There is little doubt that, pursued to success, it might become at least a source of pleasing employment, as well as a source of profit, to many who are now vainly turning their eyes in other directions for a means of livelihood in America. With laces, embroideries, fine plain needlework, and many minor fancies of woman's handicraft, studies in pressed flowers are inevitable, in the list of purchasable articles shown in all the convents of the East; and the flower pictures invariably command ready sale. The wish to obtain specimens of the flora of these countries is undoubtedly an object with many travelers, while these studies have an attractiveness entirely dissociated from their scientific interest, and find purchasers among some who know nothing of botany or its place in the world's education. We would like to see culture in pressed flowers advanced in our own land.

The correspondent requesting novel designs for a lamp shade and pincushion is recommended to make the designs herewith as follows: The lamp shade is made of silver or gold stars and crescents



fixed between two layers of azure silk, while the upper and lower rim are trimmed with clouds of yellow India silk. The pincushion is an ordinary wooden spoon, first coated white with Aspinall



enamel, and when dry is painted with small flowers and grasses in sienna, brown and gold bronze. A small cushion of light blue satin is fastened in the bowl of the spoon with glue, and the spoon itself is trimmed with light blue ribbons.

MARIAN M. THOMPSON. It is not only not impossible but comparatively easy to renovate and freshen old feathers. For doing this it is well if there be a bath-tub in the house, but if not, large washing tubs may be made to answer the purpose, provided the restoring process is accomplished in a room closed to the access of air. In the first place have the bath tub (or the large washing tubs) about two-thirds full of water as hot as the hands can bear, and make in this a strong lather of some approved washing soap, to which may be added a small quantity of spirits of ammonia. Having ripped a slit about half the width of pillows, and across one end of bolsters, with the ends dipped a few inches in the water, shake out the feathers; or, if necessary, drag them out with one hand while holding the pillow or the bolster with the other hand. But to render the job an easier one, it is well to have an assistant—one person holding the pillows while the other presses or pulls out the feathers, remembering to force down into the water as many feathers as it will conveniently hold. Feathers, when wet, occupy very much less space than when dry. Thoroughly submerged, they can be washed as easily as a piece of linen, and without breaking or tearing, as they bear much rougher treatment than it is generally supposed.

After the first scouring, in which the feathers part with an astonishing quantity of dirt, they should be passed through a second bath of hot soap-suds, and after this they should be rinsed in clear water, pressing them as dry as possible after each washing. Having then in readiness some bags, of cheese cloth (or, it may be, of muslin of closer texture than cheese cloth) fill these bags not more than one-fourth full of the feathers, and sewing up or tying up the ends of the bags, hang them to drain, and then to dry, in a sunny place, shaking up the feathers frequently until they are perfectly dried, swell and fill the bags. In this way the oldest, the most soiled, and the most offensive feathers may be restored, freshened, and rendered serviceable, wholesome, and delightful; and for ordinary purposes the feathers of chickens, ducks and turkeys, stripped from the quills, may be so washed and rendered serviceable. When it is wished to return the feathers to their permanent cases, rip slits of equal width in the muslin bags and the ticking cases, and serging the one carelessly to the other, turn the bag containing the feathers bottom upward on the pillow case, and shake the feathers down into the pillow case. In this bag there is no appreciable waste, and the persons engaged in the work are saved from being covered over and perhaps suffocated with the down. If convenient, however, it is well, in the course of years of housekeeping, to turn over all the pillows, bolsters (and feather beds) in use, to parties who make a business of renovating feathers, as the steaming process to which they subject feathers relieves them more effectually than any other means that can be resorted to of the naturally offensive and the acquired odors. And to render feathers wholesome and pure they must be washed or steamed every few years. It may not be practically amiss to add: Should the experiment of scouring feathers be made in a bath tub, it is well to remember that the water should be dipped out, as running it through the pipe would inevitably clog the pipe with down and perhaps render it unfit for further use. Old matted hair may be treated in a manner similar to feathers with satisfactory results, although we can but recommend the sending of old mattresses to the manufacturer for renovation.

EVA MILLER. Use Barbour's flax crochet thread for the purpose mentioned. There is a furore for trimmed towels for the toilet, and crochet work is the trimming most frequently resorted to. By all means use flax thread for all work intended as trimming for any linen material, as cotton or linen is inevitably incongruous—this becoming more and more perceptible with every washing. At some time direction for the decoration and trimming of towels for the hotel will be more explicitly given. In the mean time, by reference to files of the DECORATOR AND FURNISHER, you will find notes in reference to the decoration of towels, in a number of several months ago.

THE year's subscription (Four Dollars) to THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER will be saved many times over to buyers of furnishings who follow its suggestions. It is the only Art Journal of its kind in this country. Published at 150 Nassau Street, New York.